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18 August 1986

MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy Director for Intelligence

FROM:

[Redacted]

25X1

Executive Assistant to the DCI

SUBJECT:

Letter from Leo Cherne

1. The DCI received a letter last week from Leo Cherne, member of PFIAB, covering a wide range of issues. A paragraph from that letter is attached.

2. As you know the DCI has been asking about plans for a conference on how the Soviet Union will deal with the impact of data processing and telecommunications technology. He will be keeping Cherne informed as this conference develops.

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[Redacted]

Attachment:
As stated

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-- I spoke to you of the urgency of the appropriate analysts maintaining agnostic detachment about the two propositions which are part of our theology about the Soviet Union. Recent Agency studies emphasize in great detail the growing economic problems confronting the Soviet Union and in consequence the fair likelihood that Gorbechev will not be able to accomplish his modernization plans. The second conception is closely related to this one. It has long been believed that the Soviet Union cannot open up access and communications among its engineers, scientists, technologists, managements, made increasingly necessary by the high technology aspects of the information age, the presence of the computer, modems, data bases, etc. without sacrificing political control. I think it is of critical importance even if that proposition be essentially correct that it be under constant reexamination and challenge. In fact, if I would be able to select one subject for competitive analysis, it would have at its core this thesis, simply because it makes all the difference in the world if it is in fact true, as well as what one does about it. I was very much encouraged by your sharing my agnosticism. In this connection, I am enclosing a clipping from the New York Times as well as one from the London Guardian, items 9a and 10.

Soviets Condemn Reform Document

The Guardian

Moscow — In the first official reaction to the document on economic and political reform issued by a Soviet group calling itself the Movement for Socialist Renewal, a Soviet spokesman yesterday described it as "a provocation to disrupt the ongoing process of reconstruction in our society."

"It was written by some kind of authors who want to reshape our society," Gennady Gerasimov, the head of the Information Department of the Foreign Ministry, said in response to questions at a press conference.

Gerasimov said that "unfortunately it was issued by a Moscow correspondent." The document, which has been circulating for some months, was published this week by the Guardian in Britain.

It had been obtained in Moscow from official sources of a high rank and called for a range of fundamental reforms, including full freedom of the press and the freedom to establish "alternative political organizations."

The document's economic pro-

posals include many that have been endorsed by Soviet leader Mikhail S. Gorbachev, including wider rights of self-management for industrial enterprises, greater official backing for the farmers' private plots and much greater latitude for private and cooperative enterprises in the service and consumer sectors.

Gerasimov said the document was "antisocialist" in challenging the supremacy of the Communist Party.

The conclusions drawn by the document are of a provocative nature, he said.

"There are a lot of problems with the document," Gerasimov said. "There is no reference to a source, and it contains errors, particularly about the scale of the Soviet foreign debt. And why did it come up now?"

The document, which was based on a powerful critique of Soviet economic backwardness and its effect on society, warned that without urgent economic reform, the country risked falling irretrievably behind the West.

MOSCOW OUTLINES COLLEGE OVERHAUL

Kremlin Seeks to Make Higher
Education a Driving Force
in Modern Economy

By THEODORE SHABAD

The Soviet leadership has indicted the nation's system of higher education and announced a sweeping program to make it more responsive to the needs of a modern industrial economy.

The new higher education program, presented in the form of a draft decree of the ruling Communist Party, follows an overhaul last year of the system of elementary and high schools. The new plan is an attempt by the administration of Mikhail S. Gorbachev to bring universities and colleges into line with his plans for modernization and to make them a driving force for scientific and technical advances.

The aim of the program appears to be to end the traditional use of Soviet higher education as a training ground for narrow vocational and professional specialization. Instead, colleges will be expected to foster a broader-based education that would enable graduates to adapt themselves more readily to new technology and changing conditions.

Emphasis on Quality

The draft decree, which was published last month and is to be discussed in the press before being adopted by the Central Committee, says the Soviet Union has been concerned about the number of college degrees without paying sufficient attention to the quality of education.

A lack of centralized control over higher education — the nation's 894 colleges, with 5.3 million students, come under as many as 74 government agencies — has resulted in excessive duplication of training, with many colleges preparing people in the same narrow specializations, the decree finds.

It proposes that the Ministry of Higher Education, which controls universities and teacher colleges, be endowed with authority to supervise all college-level institutions, including those run by industrial ministries.

The decree says too many colleges have been operating in a vacuum, without adequate links to academic research institutions or to the practical needs of operating agencies. Furthermore, the decree finds that because of antiquated methods and inadequate college equipment, graduates are often

more, the decree finds that because of antiquated methods and inadequate college equipment, graduates are often unprepared for modern technology.

Teaching in the Work Place

This shortcoming is to be remedied by integrating higher education more closely with the rest of the economy and conducting part of the teaching process in industrial and research establishments, hospitals, farms and other prospective work places.

One aspect of this integration would be an interchange of college instructors and people in the nonacademic work force. Working engineers, for example, would teach occasional courses, and professors would offer refresher workshops to practicing engineers. The closer collaboration between industry and colleges would also be intended to stimulate university research.

Another aim of closer university-industry contacts would be to bring professional training more into line with needs. The Soviet decree condemns what it calls the "bureaucratic method of determining the required numbers of professionals" used by central Government planners.

The system, the decree charges, has resulted in excessive numbers of college graduates and inadequate numbers with an intermediate technical education. As a result, one of every two people with a college degree holds a job with skills that do not require a higher education, a job that could be filled by someone with an intermediate level of schooling.

Considering Real Needs

The Soviet Union has traditionally taken pride in its large number of graduate engineers, but the decree notes that many people with engineering degrees spend only about one-third of their working time in the kind of design and research work for which they were trained. The decree calls for the experience of other countries to be considered in determining the need for engineers in the Soviet economy.

Under the draft plan, class size is to be reduced, independent research is to be encouraged, and more optional courses are to be offered.

Soviet colleges have long been considered less prestigious and more poorly paid places of employment for science workers than industry or research institutions; the decree says, and fewer than one-third of all college departments are headed by faculty members with professorial rank.

In the Soviet academic system, the rank of professor usually goes with the doctorate degree, which represents a higher level of scholarly achievement than the Ph.D. in the United States. Most Soviet professionals earn the so-called candidate's degree, which usually corresponds to the rank of docent, inferior to that of professor. Of the 500,000 people with advanced degrees in the Soviet Union, only about 45,000 have doctorates.

The new decree calls for encouraging able people with candidate's degrees to go on to the doctorate.